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Yurchenko Regales Moscow Audience

Soviet Says CIA Used Drugs to Hold Him

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Washington Post Foreign Service

MOSCOW, Nov. 14—Vitaly Yurchenko, who claims he was the victim of a CIA kidnaping plot, starred in a dramatic two-hour press conference here today, at which he and other Soviet officials accused the United States of "state terrorism."

Held so soon before the U.S.-Soviet talks in Geneva next week, Yurchenko's first public appearance here added a sour note to the pre-summit atmospherics, as a medical official accompanying Yurchenko compared his treatment at a CIA safe house to Nazi treatment of Soviet prisoners during World War II.

In a room packed with Soviet and foreign journalists, Yurchenko, appearing agitated and tense, gave rambling answers, often straying from the point.

Yurchenko, 49, has been described by U.S. intelligence sources as an officer of the Soviet secret police, KGB, who defected in Rome Aug. 1 and was taken to the United States. He said today he was a Foreign Ministry security adviser who had served five years at the embassy in Washington. The Tass news agency described him as a "high-ranking Soviet diplomat."

Yurchenko denied allegations that he had had a love affair with a Soviet woman in Canada. U.S. intelligence sources have suggested that the collapse of the affair was a key factor in his "redefection."

Yurchenko said his family had been friendly with the woman's family in the late 1970s when they were stationed in Washington together. Any suggestion of a romantic involvement, he said, was a "cheap trick to try to compromise me from a moral point of view."

Yurchenko added details to the story he told a press conference in Washington Nov. 4. Then, and in later printed interviews here, he said he was given mind-altering drugs and kept prisoner in a house by a lake in Fredericksburg, Va.

For the first time, Yurchenko described how he gave his alleged captors the slip, first to call the Soviet Embassy from a Manassas store, and then walking out of a Georgetown restaurant to the Soviet Embassy compound, his only disguise being a new hat and an umbrella.

He also described a dinner with CIA Director William Casey at which Yurchenko said Casey appeared "with his trousers unbuttoned" and popped pills during the meal. "I thought that maybe he was also on drugs like me," said Yurchenko as the audience laughed.

[CIA spokeswoman Patti Volz said, "Mr. Yurchenko's statements are ridiculous and we have more important things to do than respond to obvious Soviet propaganda."]

The Yurchenko affair has already appeared in the Soviet media as an example of U.S. violation of human rights, part of a campaign to turn the issue so often used against the Soviets back at their accusers.

Seated next to Yurchenko, the director of a Soviet legal institute gave chapter and verse on how the kidnaping of a Soviet citizen in Rome broke local and international laws, while a spokesman for the Foreign Ministry chastised the United States for posing as "teachers" on human rights issues.

"I hope these teachers, if they read the materials from this press conference, will find somewhere inside themselves a residual of what people call conscience," said spokesman Vladimir Lomeiko.

Starting with his alleged kidnaping in Rome, Yurchenko's account might have come straight out of a spy novel, although there were occasional inconsistencies. There were a few hints of moments that were not so unpleasant.

It all began on Aug. 1 in Rome, where he had been on a business trip since July 24, Yurchenko said. He had left a group of Soviets and headed for the Vatican, when he sat down in St. Peter's Square between two pillars to drink boiled water, required for his delicate stomach, out of a Coca-Cola bottle.

"I was reaching to put the top back on, when I felt something like liquid splashed on me, a feeling as if I had been plunged in water. Everything went dark and I felt like I was falling . . . then someone grabbed me," he said.

VITALY YURCHENKO
..."I always picked up the tab"

Yurchenko said he was taken to a villa in Virginia, where, he said, he began planning his escape within a few hours of his arrival. "When you concentrate you can come up with quite sophisticated plans," he said.

On Nov. 2, Yurchenko said he decided to make his move. He asked if he could go shopping in Manassas, and was taken there by a guard he identified as Tom Hanna, whom he described as a kind man. In the Manassas department store, Yurchenko said, he eluded Hanna and walked to a phone, called the Soviet Embassy and said that if they did not get in touch with him soon, they would not see him alive.

At the store, Yurchenko said he bought a razor—thinking he would shave off his tell-tale mustache—and a hat. He and "Tom" then went off to Georgetown after determining, Yurchenko said, that there were no good French restaurants in Manassas.

At the resturant—Au Pied du Cochon—the agent ordered "a very sophisticated soup and a lobster," Yurchenko said, adding parenthetically that CIA agents liked to dine with him "because I always picked up the tab."

Yurchenko described a relentless regime of medication that he said he was told he would have to take for the rest of his life, otherwise his "brain and arteries would blow up."

Yet Yurchenko said his CIA keepers were anxious to make him look healthy. "They made me play golf," he said. "They also let me get a suntan to change the greenish color of my face."

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